



# NEWS RELEASE

## OFFICE OF THE STATE'S ATTORNEY FOR HOWARD COUNTY

For Immediate Release:

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### **Laurel Man Convicted of Human Trafficking**

A Howard County jury has convicted a Laurel man of the human trafficking of two girls, ages 13 and 16. Arthur Billy Coleman, 47, of the 1300 block of Larchdale Road was found guilty of seven counts of human trafficking, attempting human trafficking and prostitution charges at the conclusion of a 3 ½-day trial this afternoon. Jurors deliberated over five hours before returning their verdicts.

When Coleman was arrested, last July, the two girls accompanying him in his car were runaway foster children under the supervision of the Baltimore City Department of Social Services (DSS). Neither girl testified against Coleman. Both girls have subsequently run away again from DSS oversight and remain missing.

According to police and prosecutors, on July 22, 2016, Coleman drove the two girls to the Howard County Public Library on Cradlerock Way to meet a third girl who expressed an interest in making money. That third girl was an undercover Howard County police detective posing as a young girl in order to recover the runaways, one of whom was featured in numerous online prostitution ads, including the website Backpage.

Though without the testimony of the two runaway girls, Assistant State's Attorney Colleen McGuinn and police presented reams of evidence recovered from multiple cellphone text and e-mail messages—some of which contained photos of the girls in provocative poses, plus web browsing histories, and the placement of Internet ads and hotel reservations.

During the trial McGuinn told the jury that vice and narcotics detectives recognized Coleman from a chance encounter, two days prior to his arrest, at a Laurel motel. It was there that Coleman introduced himself and presented a business card for his adult service business to an undercover detective posing as a prostitute in a separate sting operation. Police believe Coleman was attempting to recruit her to work for him.

Following the verdict, Howard County Circuit Court Judge Mary M. Kramer ordered a pre-sentence investigation of Coleman and set a sentencing date of April 6, 2017. Coleman, who is being held without bond, faces a potential maximum sentence of over 100 years in prison.

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